

City of Springfield
Work Session Meeting

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION MEETING OF
THE SPRINGFIELD CITY COUNCIL HELD
MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2006

The City of Springfield Council met in a work session in the Jesse Maine Meeting Room, 225 Fifth Street, Springfield, Oregon, on Monday, October 9, 2006 at 5:30 p.m., with Mayor Leiken presiding.

ATTENDANCE

Present were Mayor Leiken and Councilors Woodrow, Ballew, Ralston, Fitch, and Pishioneri. Also present were City Manager Gino Grimaldi, City Attorney Joe Leahy, City Recorder Amy Sowa and members of the staff.

Councilor Lundberg was absent (excused).

1. Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Alternative Mobility Standards Project for State Highways.

City Manager Gino Grimaldi said this was an important topic for the City as we looked out to the future regarding growth.

Transportation Manager Tom Boyatt presented the staff report on this item. Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) staff will make a presentation and answer questions regarding the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Alternative Mobility Standards project for the metro area.

The Alternative Mobility Standards (AMS) project is an important step forward in the ongoing local and regional discussion about roadway system congestion and the impacts and consequences of that congestion. State highway system congestion, for example, could have the potential to adversely impact City economic development goals and policies in situations where plan amendments and zone changes are needed to pursue certain types of development.

The goal of the AMS project will be to balance protecting certain highways from becoming over-congested, while agreeing to lower standards for other types of highways to accept greater congestion. As the LCOG staff works through this process with local jurisdictions and the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC), City staff and the Council will be interested to understand the consequences of these decisions. In agreeing to lower mobility standards, ODOT may ask the MPC to strengthen policies designed to encourage people to drive less and use other modes more, or develop policies to protect certain areas from more intensive development as a mechanism to protect mobility on the freeway portion of the highway system.

A key point in this discussion is that the Council does maintain local policy decision authority and LCOG and the MPC will work with the City to achieve a balance that is acceptable to Springfield.

Mr. Boyatt said congestion was an important topic for a number of reasons. There would be many changes as there were no longer the resources to build the system to take care of the traffic.

The State highway system had mobility standards, called the volume to capacity ratio and the city had a mobility standard as well, the level of service. When the State ratio reached 1, it was statistically at the full capacity.

Mr. Boyatt said the AMS was just for Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) areas. There were six MPO's in the state: the big four were Portland, Salem, Eugene/Springfield and Medford; and two new ones in Bend and Corvallis. The next MPO would most likely be the Albany area. Of the six MPO's, two had already adopted AMS. Portland adopted them because they could not build their way out of their congestion. Medford was more focused and the State and MPO agreed on a limited duration lowering of the standard. The Central Lane MPO (Eugene/Springfield) was in a similar situation. We had a financial constrain list in the MPO's plan, and a project list for transportation projects. Even with all transportation projects completed, we were faced with a congested highway system.

Mr. Boyatt said the MPO had been working on this project for some time. He discussed the difference between good and bad congestion.

Tom Schwetz from Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) presented a power point presentation regarding this subject. He discussed the development of the TransPlan and level of service standards. Springfield Council had concerns about maintaining the flow of traffic and continuing development. He said City Attorney Joe Leahy was instrumental in coming up with some of the language that was included in the policy around level of service. He read from that document. He said that language closely reflected parallel thinking at the State level and what they had done in the OHP, allowing for the development of mobility standards.

Mr. Schwetz discussed congestion in different areas of the community. Congestion had an affect on the local economy. He said there would be partnerships between state and local agencies for the alternative mobility standards. Congestion could devalue the asset of growth and development, which was a concern as a region and for developers. He referred to a map in the power point which showed the different levels of congestion on state highways now and projected for 2025 (maps also found in the agenda packet on pages 17 and 18 of Attachment A). By 2025 nearly all state highways in this area would be exceeding the acceptable standards. Solutions were needed to keep the mobility-dependent trips moving, such as emergency services and freight traffic. He discussed some options for helping with mobility including ramp metering, capacity expansion, intelligent transportation system (ITS), access management, ride share, telework, staggering workshifts, and transit pass programs. Solutions were needed to support high traffic volumes in mixed-use centers. He referred to a table on Attachment A, page 3 in the agenda packet. The table showed a comparison of congestion-tolerant and mobility-dependent land uses and facilities. He discussed some regional examples from the chart. He discussed other ways to address the congestion issues including access management, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, improved bus service, TMA's, bike loaner programs, care sharing, and group pass program.

Mr. Schwetz noted that the AMS was part of the OHP and was a requirement. Having the AMS plan in place would help fulfill that state requirement. This plan included taking existing strategies in the regional transportation plan and TransPlan and targeting those at the problem areas. He said they wanted to develop a focused plan to address this issue. Congestion would be something we would need to adapt to with realistic expectations and partnerships. He asked for questions from Council.

Councilor Ralston said it appeared to him that ODOT might have to change some of their standards regarding the distance between offramps. He discussed the need for an offramp at 28th Street.

Councilor Woodrow asked Mr. Schwetz what the state's mobility standard was based on.

Mr. Schwetz said it was a numerical equivalent to the level of service standards used by the City. The State went to using the volume to capacity ratio to express that number. Level .8 is similar to level of service D or E. He said they were engineering standards for the volume of traffic that would be a stable flow. Level .7 was a higher standard requiring more capacity.

Councilor Woodrow noted the growth and the congestion on Beltline. He asked if the information would be updated before it was brought to the MPO for more requests.

Mr. Schwetz said the data presented was 2002 data. There would be more recent information used for the AMS process.

Mr. Boyatt said the MPO had the travel demand model, which looked at mobility on the links, not necessarily on mobility on the turns once you were off the system.

Councilor Fitch asked if the model for 2025 anticipated the West Eugene Parkway (WEP) being built.

Mr. Schwetz said the model in the power point did include the WEP. They were still working through the analysis that had that project removed. The likely impact of not having the WEP would not affect the other systems, but would affect West 11th, which was not a State street, but a local street.

Mr. Boyatt explained the purpose of the WEP in relation to Highway 126 West.

Councilor Ballew said this looked like a mandate from the State, but there was no financing attached.

Mr. Schwetz said this region could choose not to go through the AMS. It was just an option and opportunity they could use for parts of the system where the standards didn't currently work. He said the local commitments were things that had already been adopted. The alternative of not having AMS, would be to live with the standards as they were. It would start to affect development decisions.

Mr. Boyatt said in lowering the standards and accepting more congestion, more development could occur.

Councilor Fitch brought up expanding the UGB to meet the standards.

Councilor Pishioneri asked if this added another layer in the decision process for City staff or if it could be made in conjunction with work they currently did. He asked what was in it for the City.

Mr. Schwetz said one of the SAFETEA-LU requirements for the regional process was a congestion management process. The AMS process would accomplish this requirement. This was work needed to meet federal requirements. The State did give some money to develop the work on this project to this point. If we can use this plan to focus strategies where they would do the most good, this would give City staff a good framework within to work.

Mr. Boyatt gave an example of the AMS assisting staff with decisions. He said staff would look at the policy direction from Council on the demand side with ride sharing, EmX and other alternatives. The more Council wanted to make that happen, staff would implement those policies. It may include work on the front end that could make it easier in the end. It could help prioritize projects to spend limited resources on. He gave Hillsboro as an example.

Mayor Leiken said Councilor Fitch made a good point regarding the WEP. He discussed the probable limit on development in the west Eugene area if the WEP was never built. Land use became a critical area in transportation issues. Springfield had attained many goals. He discussed expanding the UGB to accommodate certain transportation issues. He said it was important to look at and research. He discussed limited resources and the need to partnering to make things happen. Economic development was a partnership between the private sector and the community. When discussions reached the MPO level, other jurisdictions were involved. Springfield would be following what the State was asking us to do because of limited resources.

Councilor Fitch gave feedback on the power point presentation.

Councilor Ralston said ideally the whole state should be on the same system. It could help the State better prioritize. He said he didn't see how the traffic not related to the highway system was affected. He would like to see something that tied in local traffic issues in those areas.

Mr. Schwetz said the intent was to talk about the State system. He said they had the same picture for the local section and could bring that back for Council. It looked equally as bad as the State system.

Councilor Ballew said it would be worthwhile for Mr. Schwetz to come back to Council on this issue.

Mr. Schwetz said he could bring a summary of the Congestion Study from Portland showing the impacts to businesses. He said this was the first of four presentations to be made. They would be presenting this to the Lane Transit District (LTD) Board, to Eugene on October 23 and to Lane County on November 1. The MPC would continue to work on this issue and start developing a proposal for everyone to consider.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:11 pm.

Minutes Recorder – Amy Sowa

Sid Leiken
Mayor

Attest:

Amy Sowa
City Recorder